**EAHR 811 Response – Chapters 10 and 11**

**SQ3R Technique**

As I began to survey and question chapter ten, I generated several questions for myself. My main questions were what are the competencies needed by evaluators and what are the advantages and disadvantages of internal and external evaluators/evaluations? As I read through chapter eleven, I also noted one important question focused on who are the multiple audiences required for an evaluation. As I actively read through the chapters, I began to find the answers to my questions.

**What are the Competencies Needed by Evaluators? (p.191)**

Based on the chapter, there have been several conceptual or empirical efforts to identify the tasks required of evaluators and most specifically competencies. In order to perform tasks well, the knowledge, skills, and sensitivities deemed most critical include the following:

* Ability to work with audiences to formulate key evaluation questions
* Skills in research design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation
* Planning and management skills to carry out a study in a timely and cost-effective fashion
* The ability to conduct the study in an ethical manner
* Communication skills to convey results to varying audiences through oral and written venues
* The sensitivity to work with a variety of stakeholders in a manner that meets their needs and facilitates the use of results.

**What are the Advantages and Disadvantages of Internal and External Evaluations? (p. 185-189)**

Although focused on when to conduct evaluation, the chapter also highlights some distinct characteristics on both internal and external evaluations. The purpose of the course is focused on outlining evaluation options and the importance of conducting internal, participatory evaluations undertaken by us, management or internal staff. However, there are occasions when it is useful and important to conduct an external evaluation, such as when the organization or group wants to learn about the longer term impact of the program in relation to the broader national policy and program. Some of the advantages and disadvantages of conducting internal and external evaluations are outlined below.

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| **Comparing the Advantages and Disadvantages of Internal and External Evaluations** | | |
| **Type of Evaluator** | **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** |
| **Internal Evaluator** | An insider who is familiar with the program can understand and interpret personal behaviour and attitudes within the context of the program. | The internal evaluator may know the program too well and find it difficult to be objective. |
| The internal evaluator is known and therefore poses less threat to staff, and is less likely to disrupt activities or cause anxiety. | The staff member is part of the power and authority structure and personal gain may influence his or her findings and/or recommendations. |
| The internal evaluator will need less time to learn about the organization and its programs. | An insider may have no special evaluation training or experience. |
| **External Evaluator** | Someone who is not personally involved in the program can be more objective when collecting and analyzing data and presenting the results. They often feel more comfortable when presenting negative information. | The external person may cause anxiety among program staff who are unsure of the motives of the evaluation/evaluator. |
| The outsider is not a part of the power structure and may been seen as more credible. | An outsider may not fully understand the goals and objectives of the program or its context. |
| The external evaluator can take a fresh look at the program or organization. | An external evaluation can be expensive, time consuming, and disruptive to the ongoing progress. |

Unfortunately internal and external evaluations are often viewed to be mutually exclusive and they should not be. Combining the two can compensate for some of the shortfalls, but never should one be considered a replacement for the other.

**Who are the Multiple Audiences required for an Evaluation?**

As indicated in the textbook, “an evaluation is adequate only if it collects information from and reports information to all legitimate evaluation audiences” (p.200). As an individual new to the area of program evaluation, I need to determine who makes up that audience. The following entities should be considered when devising an evaluation (p. 202):

* Developer of the program
* Funder of the program
* Person/agency who identified the local need
* Boards/agencies who approved delivery of the program at the local level
* Local funder
* Other providers of resources
* Top managers of agencies delivering the program
* Program managers
* Program deliverers
* Sponsor of the evaluation
* Direct clients of the program
* Indirect beneficiaries of the program
* Potential adopters of the program
* Groups excluded from the program
* Groups perceiving negative side effects of the program or the evaluation
* Group losing power as a result of use of the program
* Groups suffering from lost opportunities as a result of the program
* Public/community members
* Other

The checklist given in the checklist is very informative and a great starting tool for any new or experienced evaluator.

**PART II – Personal Response**

With my limited to zero experience with program evaluation, I found both chapter ten and eleven very informative in providing the information to understand the responsibilities of a program evaluator. Based on the chapters that I have read throughout this course, I have found that most often management decides what the program evaluation goals should be. Then an evaluation expert helps the organization to determine what the evaluation methods should be, and how the resulting data will be analyzed and reported back to the organization. In general these evaluators may be internal or external depending on the type of program, the degree of the evaluation, and the available budgetary funds. More often than not, most organizations do not have the resources (time, money, or personnel) to carry out the ideal evaluation.

Based on that information, the readings that I have done, and the talks that I have had with varying levels of management in my various careers, it seems as though many organizations have found a means to complete the minimum effort needed to generate a maximum response of what they need to know to make a decision about their programs. If they can afford any outside help at all, it is used for identifying the appropriate evaluation methods and how the data can be collected. The organization might find a less expensive resource to apply the methods, e.g., conduct interviews, send out and analyze results of questionnaires, etc.

If no outside help can be obtained, the organization can still learn a great deal by applying the methods and analyzing results themselves. However, there is a strong chance that data about the strengths and weaknesses of a program will not be interpreted fairly if the data are analyzed by the people responsible for ensuring the program is a good one. Program managers in areas where I have been employed have strong biases. This comment is not to fault program managers, but to recognize the strong biases inherent in trying to objectively look at and publicly (at least within the organization) report about their programs. Therefore, if at all possible, in my opinion having someone other than the program managers look at and determine evaluation results is far more commendable.

Learning about the responsibilities of a program evaluator made me interested in researching what kinds of competencies organizations are looking for in a program evaluator. Through my research, I found an excellent resource created by ABET (2009). ABET Program Evaluator Competency Model outlines the knowledge, skills, and attitudes exhibited by a successful program evaluator. Based on this information, I am intrigued to learn what SIAST looks for when recruiting program evaluators. I now have to do some further research. I hope as I can gain more experience in this class and more experience in my profession, I will be able to meet some of the competencies.

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| **Desired Competency** | **Desired Proficiency** | **Application of Skill** |
| **Technically  Current** | * Demonstrates required technical credentials for the position * Engaged in lifelong learning and current in his or her field | * Able to apply technical knowledge to ascertain the level of conformance to program accreditation requirements * Remains current in accreditation procedures and requirements |
| **Effective at Communicating** | * Easily conducts face-to-face interviews * Writes clearly and succinctly * Presents focused, concise oral briefings | * Interviews personnel to understand program operations * Writes succinct, criterion-centered statements of program strengths and weaknesses * Develops succinct findings for exit interview * Keeps team chair informed prior to and during the visit |
| **Interpersonally Skilled** | * Friendly and sets others at ease * Listens and places input into context * Open-minded and avoids personal bias * Forthright, doesn’t hold back what needs to be said * Adept at pointing out strengths and weaknesses in a non-confrontational manner | * Interviews and readily obtains input from faculty, administration, industry advisors, and students * Evaluates program against criteria within the context of the institution * Evaluates and constructively conveys program strengths and weaknesses |
| **Team-Oriented** | * Readily accepts input from team members * Works with team members to reach consensus * Values team success over personal success | * Compares program findings with those of other visitation team members to improve consistency * Looks for and listens to common issues across programs * Assists other team members as needed during the visit |
| **Professional** | * Conveys professional appearance and demeanour * Committed to contributing and adding value to the evaluation process * Considered a person with high integrity and ethical standards | * Represents ABET and responsible technical society as a practicing professional * Willing to make observations to stimulate innovation and further the program’s efforts toward continuous improvement * Shows professional respect for institution faculty and staff * Upholds ABET’s code of conduct at all times |
| **Organized** | * Focuses on meeting deadlines * Focuses on critical issues and avoids minutia * Displays take-charge initiative * Takes responsibility and works under minimum supervision | * Formulates preliminary program strengths and weakness assessment based upon review of materials supplied prior to the visit * Focuses on critical findings, effectively cites supportive observations, relates to appropriate criteria, and suggests possible avenues to resolution * Submits high quality documentation to team chair on time * Makes difficult recommendations when appropriate |

**References**

ABET. (2009). ABET Program Evaluator Competency Model retrieved from <http://www.abet.org/Linked%20Documents-UPDATE/PEV%20Docs/2005%20Competency%20Model%20Table.pdf> on May 25, 2009.

Fitzpatrick, J.L., Sanders, J.R., & Worthern, B.R. (2004). *Program evaluation: Alternative approaches and practical guidelines.* Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.